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ABSTRACT

The number of objectives that formal education is expected to achieve has grown incredibly over the years. The task of educating has become so complex that the problems are hardly comprehensible. As with other complex problems, people tend to turn in frustration to simplistic solutions. When educational variables are studied, unfortunately, no single variable appears to be the deciding factor. What is crucial is the manner in which the variables are combined in each specific situation. Making change strategies effective requires optimum functioning of each factor in the model. Analysis of the research on intervention reveals nine factors worthy of attention and manipulation, clustered loosely into four areas: subject matter and classroom organization; student aptitude, ability, and perseverance; instructional technique and expressiveness; and opportunity for learning and self-instructional media. Traditional strategies for educational improvement have involved statewide commissions and task forces, teacher education, and methods incorporating research, development, diffusion, and evaluation. A strategy used by the League of Cooperating Schools and the Institute for the Development of Educational Activites (I/D/E/A) over six years involved committed faculty and administrators, a network of peer schools, a resource center providing support, and ongoing communications between principals and between teachers. (Author/PGD)

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CHANGE STRATEGIES AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF LEARNING

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CHANGE AS INTERVENTION

Educational leaders must take responsibility for identifying or initiating plans for improvement, mobilizing the needed resources, and following through with implementation. There is an extraordinary array of obstacles--so many, in fact, that most plans go very little beyond the talking stage. Presumably, the ultimate purpose is to enhance the learning of some identifiable students.

Two major dangers lurk at all times. The first is that the ultimate intent will be obscured or obfuscated in the creation of mechanisms thought to be required. Vehicles of transport become more important than getting somewhere.

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The care of these vehicles becomes an end in itself.

The second danger is that those who are entrusted with leadership responsibility, who view themselves as change agents, come to see themselves as omnipotent, as knowing what is best for others, even when knowledge about the life or work settings of these others may be quite limited. This danger can and often does assume awesome proportions when those "who know best" carry with them resources desired by their clients and use this power to induce or seduce others to their will.

These dangers are sufficiently pervasive to sidetrack energies devoted to the study and practice of educational change. Administrators, supervisors and other management personnel expend an inordinate amount of time attending meetings, sending messages to one another and writing reports, often with little thought to what their efforts are supposed to affect. Reformers make plans for others, sometimes without ascertaining whether their plans are wanted or will improve existing conditions. Keeping busy easily is equated with doing good.

Mounting any effort to bring about change in schools and classrooms, where it all must come together, is an undertaking of considerable logistical difficulty and great moral responsibility. When we create strategies designed to influence how others will spend their valuable time and energy, we enter into critical domains of what is morally right and wrong, good and bad. Intervening in the lives of others is so fraught with danger as to cause some people to challenge the morality even of education. Although I do not share this view, the perils are sufficient to give one pause. It is the rare culture, indeed, that has not found it necessary or desirable to intervene through some deliberate mechanism such as teaching to assure learnings not always provided or reinforced naturally by the surrounding environment.

Accelerating change and cultural complexity increase the amount and kinds of learnings assigned to mechanisms of deliberate intervention. The United States of America provides a classic example. More than three hundred years ago, in our early colonies, it was deemed necessary to provide schools

to assure the skills of literacy needed to understand the principles of religion and the laws of the land--skills not necessarily learned in home and community. Rapid industrialization, urbanization and population growth, particularly during the past two hundred years, and growing identification with a world community in this century have vastly expended our expectations for what is to be learned through educational intervention. Today, it is widely agreed that the goals to be achieved through such intervention include the fundamental literacy skills sought from the beginning, preparation for a career and job satisfaction, the intellectual skills necessary to independent judgment and continued learning, an understanding of our traditions and values, the ability to function adequately in a variety of social settings, the ability to plan and organize for the realization of personal goals, a broad array of knowledge and skills essential to performing constructively as a citizen, self-understanding, aesthetic perception and creativity, emotional and physical well-being and moral and ethical character.

The list boggles the mind--especially the minds of administrators and teachers who have been expected to achieve all of them through the schools,

not just for a few who are strongly reinforced by the home but for everyone. Perhaps it is this sheer load of expectations that has caused legislators to turn to first this and then that panacea; innovators to try single, presumably powerful interventions; and charlatans to get so much mileage out of elixiers and placebos. When problems are both urgent and complex and clearly have outstripped both funded knowledge and applicable past experience, humans too often turn to simple analyses, single solutions and rules and regulations, perhaps to restore some semblance of simplicity and order. Teacher education requirements and regulations constitute a glaring case in point.

Usually, as cultures become increasingly complex and allocate more and more to educational interventions, they also develop an accelerating array of agencies and institutions performing educational functions. With the advent of telegraph, newspapers spread the tapped-out messages to all those who could not receive and interpret them individually. Later, radio and television brought not only news directly into homes but also a host of messages deliberately designed to change both thought and personal behavior. We now live in a culture which only

partly shapes and molds through its established traditions and tested beliefs, which is itself pushed this way and that by its own apparatus of intervention. In the face of what the television huckster is saying, with a million dollars worth of "proof" and visual credibility to back him up, grandma's wisdom is remotely eccentric and mother, clearly, is still in "the olden days" of the 1950's.

While we continue to equate education with schooling, seeing television as only entertaining or supplementing, our children are being educated through a variety of agencies and institutions of which school is only one. Until we bring all of these and others with potential into perspective and deliberately shared responsibility, we will continue to view the schools with alarm, manipulate them to little avail and fall short of achieving the array of educational goals we have set for ourselves.

Just as we restrict the scope of educational intervention required in our kind of society by equating education with schooling, we further restrict it by equating schooling with a teacher and a class of children. Consequently, we tend

to assume, on one hand, that the provision of schools is adequate provision for education and that the provision of teachers assures adequate schooling. Not surprisingly, educational intervention stemming from such limited assumptions usually proves to be both inadequate and disappointing.

Even when one focuses only on schooling as the educational medium, there is little to give one confidence regarding what is likely to enhance learning. Consequently, one is well advised to employ change strategies designed to help those in schools define and find solutions to their own problems. Approaches based on assumptions of what works best for all are destined for failure. The balance of this paper is designed, first, to summarize what we know about the effects of various interventions in classroom learning and, second, to set forth a model of change in which those staffing schools play a major part.

CLASSROOM INTERVENTIONS

Single Variables

There have been many studies into single interventions in learning, large numbers of them focused on process variables such as pupil attentiveness

rather than on products such as achievement. Of those in the latter category, more than half have failed to obtain a predicted relationship between an intervention and either pupil achievement or attitudes.[1] Averch et al. examined studies into the effects of differences in teachers, class size, instructional methods and the like, concluding that nothing consistently and unambiguously makes a difference in student outcomes.[2] From a review of research on 16 variables, Jamison et al. concluded that none consistently affects student performance.[3] They looked deeply into studies of student-to-teacher ratios, assuming this to be a particularly important variable because it is economically relevant and under a school system's control. They concluded that class size has little influence on student learning.[4]

And so it goes in review after review. If there is anything that all of this should teach us it is that commitment to some single factor in something as complex as the promotion of learning is doomed. If any one significantly outweighed all others in regard to theoretical underpinnings and potential power, surely its benefits would be well known by now. No such candidate has appeared. Nonetheless, policy makers, researchers, and practitioners keep hoping and trying.

It is a grave mistake to conclude from such inquiry that nothing makes a difference. We know that teachers appearing to work with similar conditions create different classroom climates and, indeed, produce different results. Averaging data across schools and classrooms in large-scale evaluations such as the Coleman Report wipes out such differentials.[5] And yet, those experienced in compensatory instructional intervention conclude that for benefits to occur programs must be geared to very specific pupil characteristics and needs.[6] These, in turn, depend not on a method but, presumably, on a skilled teacher's sensitive orchestration of a host of variables operating virtually simultaneously.

Since dissection of what is important in classroom learning so often comes down to the teacher, it is to be expected that teaching is a much-researched variable. Too often, however, the topic has been approached as though some single, powerful factor such as the use of reward or praise explains all. Clearly, the promise lies in recognizing the complexity of teaching at the outset and then hypothesizing potentially powerful variables. Such an approach assumes that not one but each of ten or twenty factors makes some difference and that all of these together make or could make a significant difference. But now the problem

appears overwhelming because the teacher, whose pedagogy is a composite of many elements, in turn is but one of several possibly potent variables of influencing classroom learning.

Multiple Variables

Ironically, bringing the analysis around to recognition of multiple rather than single variables carries with it the danger of recognizing almost everything but nothing in particular as important. Although, for example, interclass grouping on some criterion of homogeneity such as I.Q. or reading achievement appears not to warrant the effort, this does not rule out the instructional usefulness of certain kinds of grouping. The skilled teacher with a heterogeneous class groups for specific purposes and rearranges the curriculum, methods and materials in the light of purpose and group composition. Grouping in such instances is neither inconsequential nor the definitive factor.

The plethora of research into single phenomena leaves one with both a feeling of fragmentation and the conclusion that instruments are now available for

further inquiry into a great many things. What is needed, at a minimum, is some ordering of the variables that have attracted the bulk of attention and conceptualization of a relatively small array likely to account for a good deal of the total impact on student learning. Beyond these, we need theories that will exclude as much irrelevancy as possible and pose hypotheses around which present and future cumulative research might be clustered. Such theories probably will arise out of the time-consuming, expensive process of observing what goes on in classrooms.

The clustering of studies employed by Dunkin and Biddle in their comprehensive review of the field is useful as a guide both to practice and to future inquiry.[7] Under the label "context variables," they include subject matter, nongrading and multigrading, computer-assisted instruction, experimental curricula, class size, physical properties of the classroom, equipment, and a host of pupil variables. They conclude that many of these affect teaching and classroom behavior in at least minor ways. Under "presage variables," they include

all those factors of background, attitudes, expectations, years of experience, and the like pertaining to teachers that researchers have attempted to associate with teaching effectiveness. Their conclusion here is that the "track record" to date is not impressive.

They view theory and research in the realm of observable events in the classroom as having great potential and perform a valuable service in grouping the scores of variables studied into just a few categories. They include in their "trait model" such teacher behaviors as praise, criticism, questioning, lecturing, giving directions, postquestion structuring, and so forth. Although studies have connected some of these variables with product variables, Dunkin and Biddle are not optimistic about there being much power here. They see somewhat more potential in the "interaction model" which includes positive and negative reinforcement, appropriateness, redirection, episode length and the like, while recognizing that this category inadequately covers classroom events.

Research into teaching has been dominated by psychological approaches. But the "social systems" model depends as much on sociology as on psychology

and parallels work in the field of leadership. It endeavors to encompass actions of both pupils and teachers and the climate attained and sustained. Particularly relevant is the research of Kounin who has sought to examine the smoothness and momentum of classroom activities, the extent to which the teacher is on top of things and seeks to keep pupils involved, the teacher's ability to stimulate pupil enthusiasm, etc.[8] The social systems model, together with models having more to do with psychological considerations such as expressiveness and reinforcement and the kinds of context variables mentioned earlier, brings us close to an adequately comprehensive framework for classroom analysis and intervention.

TOWARD A MODEL OF CLASSROOM LEARNING

It becomes apparent that what we need is a conceptual model of major factors thought to affect school learning and how they interact. Such a model is certain to be an oversimplification but, nonetheless, an improvement on what is now so varied a terrain that one needs a high level of expertise to find a path

through it. A change strategy likely to be productive must encourage optimum functioning of each factor in the model.

My analysis of research or intervention in learning leads me to conclude that there are nine categories worthy of attention and manipulation. Five of these have been identified in the model of classroom learning developed by Carroll.[9] My nine cluster loosely into four broad categories: subject matter and classroom organizational context; aptitude, ability and perseverance (all from Carroll); pedagogy and expressiveness; opportunity for learning and self-instructional educational media.

By subject matter, I mean the several domains of human knowledge and experience and the conventional, usually printed, media for their teaching. All domains implied by our socio-political goals must be included. For example, inclusion of the arts in our formal statements of intent means that the arts must appear in the operational curricula as a commitment and not a sometime-frill. This is a face validity criterion that does not require research justification.

By organizational context, I mean vertical and horizontal structure of the classroom, students-to-teacher ratio, and student mix. Teachers seeking to individualize and personalize instruction require the vertical flexibility of multigrading and nongrading. They must not be or feel obliged to confine their programs to artificial, arbitrary grade levels. They need a heterogeneous mix of students because students slow in some things learn from those who are gifted without retarding the latter. And they need a varied mix to assure the interclass, interracial, interethnic kinds of associations mandated by our rich and diverse society. They need manageable-size groups so that they can keep on top of things, have the energy and drive required to be "with it," to care for each student's learning. The "comfort level" expressed by teachers is about 25. But there can be many variations in group size, especially when teachers team teach and, as is rarely the case, wisely employ alternative media. To repeat, the basic class should be heterogeneous, specific grouping arrangements serving to facilitate cognitive, social and affective outcomes as well as a wide array of learnings not usually measured by standardized tests.[10]

Carroll's model meets the criteria of using a very small number of unifying concepts, conceptually independent of one another and referring to phenomena at the same level of discourse:[11] Not surprisingly, since Carroll is a psychologist, his model is more psychologically than, for example, sociologically based. Three of his five elements reside in the individual: aptitude, ability to understand instruction and perseverance. But, interestingly, he treats these in a nontraditional way, phrasing them to suggest malleability rather than immutable givens. For example, he defines aptitude as the amount of time needed by individuals to learn the task under optimal instructional conditions. This view is basic to the idea of children proceeding at their own pace and, for example, Bloom's approach to mastery learning.[12] Likewise, ability defined as ability to understand instruction suggests possibilities for classroom intervention: Mercer's pioneering work demonstrates the folly in labeling and giving up on seemingly retarded children who may have difficulty with one set of written or oral instructions for all but who function at normal or gifted levels within a culturally appropriate normative framework.[13]

Two of Carroll's elements stem from conditions outside of the individual: quality of instruction and opportunity, the latter defined as time allowed for learning. The former is what so much of the research on teaching has encompassed. It is my own view that clustering the complex factors involved into a single component is too much of a simplification, even though any attempt at division probably would violate Carroll's criterion of conceptual independence. I shall suggest a separation later.

The model's emphasis on time, coming at it from two interfacing perspectives, is of particular interest, given the relatively low visibility of this factor in the research literature. Wiley and Harnischfeger regard this as a grave oversight and have both summarized and conducted research showing large variations in degree of exposure to schooling and large effects of exposure on achievement.[14]

I have divided Carroll's instructional category into two: pedagogy and expressiveness. The first of these I view as technical. We can and should train teachers to define objectives, be alert to what is going on in the classroom,

cue children whose attention is beginning to wander, reinforce desired responses, actively engage children in dialogue, and so on--behaviors which have some positive relationship to learning. But these skills are quite different from genuine, expressive responsiveness to and trust in children. Teachers do not need to ooze love for children; such may not even be desirable. But it is clear that biting sarcasm and criticism turn off students in the classroom.[15] Beyond these limits to acceptable teacher behavior, there probably is a wide range of positive expressiveness conveying support and encouragement which is positively related to student learning.

I include media simply because classroom intervention need not be confined to what merely extends or enriches the teacher as medium of instruction. Radio, television, and programmed instruction, without direct teacher supervision, are as effective for some things as is conventional teaching.[16] These alternative media are neglected in the classroom--even though radio and television have proved themselves elsewhere--as we continue to pursue our myopic habit of equating schooling with human teachers. A classroom student-to-teacher ratio of 25 need not exclude the possibility of additional numbers of students being

accommodated simultaneously elsewhere by electronic teachers sharing the instructional burden.

In fact, it is long past time for us to conceptualize a model of education that transcends school and classroom, bringing into operational juxtaposition all of our resources for learning in a total ecology of education.[17] If there is any lesson our educational leaders should be learning it is that the challenge of creating effective schools is all tied up with the larger challenge of securing educational commitment and involvement from the home and immediate community, public service institutions, the communications enterprise, recreational and other nonformal agencies and business and industry. We can and must create effective schools but schools, however good, always will fall far short of providing for the full range of learning needs in our kind of society.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The task of the educational leader is to articulate directions for educational improvement and to help create mechanisms and infrastructures by means of which they can be achieved. What procedures should he or she follow?

The traditional approaches have been through statewide commissions and task forces, teacher education, and a variety of strategies not quite accurately labeled the linear model of research, development, diffusion, and evaluation. Each has its assets and liabilities, strengths and weaknesses.

Statewide Commissions and Task Forces

The appointment of commissions and panels, usually made up of scholars, practitioners and community leaders has the advantage of drawing to public attention some problem or need and alerting subpublics likely to have responsibility for implementing recommendations. In effect, this top level executive action identifies a problem, signals that it is to get attention, and sets in motion processes which are intended to trigger actions and reactions for a long time after the final report is in and dissected by the press.

Unless recommendations are followed by legislative action--and frequently even when such occurs--the impact tends to be diffuse rather than specific. Frequently, the effect is to mobilize energy around a need which previously had little visibility. Although supporting evidence for proposals may not be forthcoming or provided, in many instances the total impact is greater than through sharply pinpointed research and development efforts.

But the positive features are virtually mirror images of the accompanying weaknesses. The technique is essentially hortatory; groups are influenced by persuasion. For various reasons, however, the specifics of what they are being persuaded to rarely are enunciated. The very diversity of commission membership makes agreement difficult on anything other than generalities. Bringing these generalities to a level of specificity would thwart the near-consensus usually required.

Rarely do such commissions have a sufficiently long life-span or adequate staff work. Consequently, recommendations depend more heavily on the views of powerful committee members than on data. Often, these represent relatively enlightened conventional wisdom; but the blending of this wisdom and thorough review of funded knowledge tends to be the exception rather than the rule. Sometimes, political leadership already has changed hands by the time a final report is written. A short half-life for the recommendations too often is a generous prediction.

Fortunately, there are notable exceptions. A model for this approach can be derived from the British experience with White Papers, Royal Commissions and the like. The Plowden Report on primary schooling achieved visibility from Lady Plowden's stature and considerable respectability from the intensive period of reviewing research, visiting other countries, consulting authorities, and the like. Unless we are prepared to conduct commission inquiries at such a level of depth and intensity and tie recommendations to implementation strategies, we probably should cease and desist.

Teacher Education

Our proclivity for equating schooling and teaching makes the education of teachers an obvious, popular approach to effecting change. Outwardly, at least, it appears simple and straightforward. One arranges for those who know to teach those who don't. Direct costs are minimal, since responsibility for securing what is thought to be required is placed on the individual teacher. Schooling is the largest enterprise not providing opportunities for in-service education and professional

improvement at the time and cost of the industry. And this is one of the major reasons why professional development programs are so ill-focused and ineffective.

Although teacher education has face validity as an improvement strategy, it is plagued by a myriad of deficiencies. It almost invariably proceeds from a base of no data regarding what specific teachers need or know. In-service, professional development is so interwoven with salary schedules and salary schedules with degrees and credit points that a locally based program sharply focused on making teachers more competent immediately finds itself in competition with what already is required. Thus, a teacher enrolls in a degree-oriented curriculum for administrators when what he or she needs is to learn to do present work better. Since teachers are paying for it out of their own pockets anyway, they can hardly be required to spend their time and money otherwise. Usually, too, teachers leave their immediate problems and schools to learn what may not be viewed as valuable or is not reinforced by the social system of the school within which they carry on daily work.

The education and re-education of teachers has such obvious significance that it always ranks high in the official rhetoric af school and educational improvement. But the present lack of--and, indeed, general disinterest in--a science of education contributes to setting rules and regulations which, in general, inhibit the exercise of badly needed creativity and experimentation in the field. After years of observing and studying the problems, I am now prepared to conclude that there is an inverse correlation between the extent of licensing and accrediting activity emanating from state governance and the quality of teacher education programs.

Input-Output Models

A recently popular model of planned educational change is the input, environmental response output model which assumes that activity follows and is evaluated in accordance with purpose. It has been brought to a high level of assumed rationality and visibility through state and federal efforts of research, development, dissemination and evaluation. Usually, there is some research into need before

there begins the process of developing new curricular materials, instructional techniques or alternative organizational forms. Usually, too, the process of development is accompanied by testing, feedback and retesting to assure quality. The process is both rational and focused. It is as likely to seek reform as it is to seek improvement. It has attracted good minds and substantial sums of money. The linear R D D and E model has extraordinary appeal because it is so much a part of the western rational model of the world which has played a significant role in bringing us to where we are as a nation. For many it is god and the computer is the ultimate expression of that in which we have faith.

Giant-size attributes sometimes are accompanied by large-scale shortcomings. The major weakness of this model, especially as used in complex human enterprises such as education, which lacks a precise set of priorities, a highly developed science and technology, and a clear image of intended products, is a considerable underestimation of the complexity of the so-called target. Teachers are viewed as relatively passive, only mildly resistant and, in general, waiting for

better ideas and ways from others.[18] Sarason has pointed out that if there is any one thing that effectively blunts and negates externally initiated reform efforts, it is the culture of the school and all the roles, activities and reward systems that go into maintaining that culture.[19] Failure to understand this has foreordained to failure millions of dollars worth of highly rational school improvement efforts.

Because of both their necessarily focused conceptual character and the high costs involved, reform efforts following this model address themselves to only one intervention or a small cluster of variables. Our previous analysis of research reveals that no single variable consistently produces significant improvements in student achievement.[20] State and federal elected officials take a dim view of high expenditures and insignificant gains on standardized test scores. They tend to overreact to the Coleman[21] and Jencks[22] studies, shifting generally from inflated expectations for schools to the erroneous conclusion that schools, not just ill-conceived, inadequately comprehensive projects, make little or no difference in the lives of students.

The Responsive Model

There remains a model that probably is too homespun in its assumptions, too demanding in its operation and too lacking in its glamor to attract the collaborative support it requires. Nonetheless, I am convinced that some reasonable approximation of it is absolutely necessary if we are to have the kind of school vigor and rejuvenation we so sorely need. Unfortunately, it is not the stuff instant recognition of charismatic leaders is made of; it calls for the long haul of commitment, dedication and hard work.

You and I know that there are literally thousands of teachers who want satisfying work and who entered teaching because they thought they would find it there. It is clusters of such teachers and dedicated principals who together produce the good schools which flourish for brief periods of time and which are used again and again by each of us to illustrate that schools can be exciting places. We conclude that they depend on unique and fortuitous circumstances that probably cannot be replicated without going on to consider what is involved and how the core of professional commitment in thousands of schools might be mobilized.

To find out what goes on when staffs try to improve their schools and how to bring about and maintain good learning environments constituted the focus of a project conducted by a group of us over a six-year period in the League of Cooperating Schools.

There is no time for details.[23] We began with the assumption that the single school with its principal, teachers, students, and parents is the organic unit for educational improvement. This is the place where the efforts of all of us ultimately must find a home, whether these be through teacher education, research, curriculum development, or supervision. In the final analysis, those who comprise this organic social system must sense an important problem or need, come to grips with it, take action, and change personal behaviors or the most highly touted reforms simply will not find their way into the schoolhouse. This is the culture we must try to understand, support, and help become healthy or our entire system of schooling will be ill-nourished and malfunctioning, no matter what intended improvements we pump into it.

We assumed, also, that change is lonely, difficult, even dangerous, and demands of those who participate in it the discipline of delayed gratification. The need for company and peer group reinforcement are powerful forces both for keeping things as they are and for moving out into the new and unexplored. We decided at the outset to try to enlist these forces in the cause of deliberate efforts to improve. We reasoned that norms pertaining to inquiry, discussion, group decision-making, and the like might be substituted for the norms of isolation, nonsharing and so on which serve to inhibit teachers from using anything that smacks of innovation or creative individuality. A consortium of 18 schools joined together in self-improvement promised peer association, sharing and support going beyond that available in just one school.

Next, we assumed that external support in the form of encouragement, legitimization of ideas, materials, etc., was essential, at least initially. And so we created a hub or center from which such support would flow. Erroneously, we believed that the need for it would diminish and, ultimately, disappear. What we learned was that the need remained; the nature of the desired support changed.

Attempting to improve oneself or one's school is lonely. The knowledge that someone knows what you are doing and that this someone cares and trusts, even when you fail, is extraordinarily important and deplorably absent from the schooling scene. Freud called it "love."

But, of course, love is not enough. Personal skills and abilities have to be developed. And so there were monthly meetings of principals, designed largely by them, to learn the leadership techniques they found themselves needing. Teachers visited teachers in other League schools to get ideas at the practical level, came back to their own schools to talk about them and then frequently modified what they had been doing before. Mini-workshops emerged, taught by teachers perceived as having something to offer and attended by teachers who wanted what was offered. No fees were paid, no credits were earned. Humans are the funniest animals; they like to learn, especially when there is a considerable element of choice.

For reasons which largely perplex me, many educators not involved in or with schools simply don't understand what I have been talking about. By and large, teachers and parents don't have much difficulty. Researchers, consultants and

self-styled change agents frequently simply push it all aside. Although I don't have hard data for this conclusion, my impression to date is that the more distant from schools and classrooms, the greater difficulty one experiences with what I now refer to as the responsive model of educational change.[24]

I do not take these difficulties lightly. No doubt, they stem in large part from the fact that the strategy runs so counter to the standard, linear model through which one defines and refines objectives and then selects specific methods to be injected into the system. Visitors invariably asked us what innovations we were promoting and went away puzzled when we told them that the League was the innovation; that we had created a new social system out of existing parts; and that the educators involved decided what ideas and resources made sense in the light of process criteria they developed. Sometimes, school personnel were attracted to well-known innovations, sometimes not.

Visitors asked how much achievement scores had improved (even when the project had hardly begun) and were astounded when we said, again, that the schools selected what to improve and this did not necessarily mean reading or

mathematics. We also said that we were prepared to help teachers measure such things and that we were gathering overall data on children's attendance at and liking for school.

Our work made no big splash--no headlines in Time, Newsweek, or the New York Times. How do eager reporters get a newsworthy story out of every-day folks trying to do their job better and "experts" who don't claim to have simple answers to the most complex problems? But our responsive approach is catching on. 25 |I|D|E|A| is utilizing some of it in networks involving more than 1400 schools. The JDR 3RD Fund finds compatibility between their ideas for improving the arts in general education and our approaches to change. Increasingly, we are receiving requests from intermediate educational agencies and districts, in particular, to assist in setting up leagues of schools.

In summary, the minimum essentials of the responsive model of school improvement are the following:

1. A process of dialogue, decision making, action and evaluation in each school involving at least a core of teachers and the principal at the outset and, soon,

most of the teachers together with student and parent representatives. This DDAE process must be guided rigorously by a set of criteria pertaining to the kinds of procedures to be used and resources to be consulted.[26]

2. A network of peer schools (from 12 to 20 constitute a manageable number), committed to working together and sharing ideas, methods and materials over a period of several years.

3. A resource center possessing no punitive authority, existing solely to provide support and staffed by persons whose rewards come not from giving "expert" consultation but from assisting others to help themselves. Such a center should not be reluctant to propose and analyze ideas, provide guides to resource materials, and secure special kinds of assistance on request. And it should play a major role as a switching station for bringing together principals and teachers wishing to give or receive help.

4. An ongoing structure by means of which principals continuously explore their mutual problems and develop together the needed, changing leadership skills.

5. Temporary "pedagogical service stations" through which teachers with a track record in improved practices teach those who want help in specific aspects of any major element thought to have bearing on improved intervention in classroom learning.

Clearly, infrastructures of this kind function most effectively when the central administration of school districts decentralizes considerable authority as well as responsibility to local schools. They call for new approaches to supervision, resource allocation and teacher education.[27] They would benefit immensely too, from regional educational service centers with curriculum development capability and an array of specialized services available on request. The goal always is to increase local school capacity for problem solving, a goal now being taken seriously by such agencies as the National Institute of Education.[28]

Toward Knowledge-Based Educational Agendas

One problem shared by all approaches to school improvement is that of developing careful agendas. Sometimes, these emerge from serious preparation

for the visits of review teams from regional accrediting agencies. But even these relatively comprehensive proceedings depend heavily on impressions and a paucity of hard data on provision for educational goals, use of school time, topics actually taught through the grades and so on.

It was our conclusion, after working closely with the 18 schools in the League over a period of six years that almost all schools threshed about for unduly long periods of time in trying to agree on agendas through a process heavily dependent on opinions and minimally drawing on hard data. And, once into a problem, priorities often were little or no more clear than before. It appeared to us, also, that the schools might benefit from some awareness of any common weaknesses or inadequacies of schools begging for attention.

And so we launched "A Study of Schooling in the United States." This ambitious project is designed to gather data on what goes on in school triples--elementary and junior high schools feeding into secondary schools--in a number of states; to review research and ongoing practices with a view to developing arrays of

defensible alternatives; to pose recommendations and strategies for improving schools generally; and to provide a methodology and accompanying instruments by means of which local schools, with the assistance of various intermediate agencies, might develop agendas for their own improvement.

It is my conclusion that self-improvement plans of local school initiative, conducted within supportive infrastructures of the kind described here, constitute our present best bet for increasing the dynamic character and effectiveness of schools. To assure that the problems addressed will not be trivial and will include reform in as well as improvement upon existing practices, there needs to be a much more rigorous process than now exists for appraising the nature and conduct of present programs. For attainment of a truly comprehensive educational system including more than effective schools, such appraisal should take stock of the present effectiveness of all existing educational agencies and provide an inventory of potentially educative institutions. In this and other ways, we will advance steadily toward the realization of an educative society.

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